



# FMNF Plan Revision Ecological Sustainability Forum Feedback Forms Analysis August 6, 2013

The Nature Conservancy and the Coastal Conservation League served as co-sponsors of the Ecological Sustainability Forum. Including presenters, approximately 75 people attended the forum, 55 non-Forest Service attendees and 20 Forest Service employees. Thirty-one organizations and interested citizens were represented at the forum to include:

- Barrier Island EcoTours
- Belle W. Baruch Foundation
- Berkeley Charleston Dorchester Council of Governments (BCD COG)
- Cape Romain Wildlife Refuge
- Charleston County Parks and Recreation Commission (CCPRC)
- Charleston Natural History Society-Audubon
- Clemson Extension
- Coastal Conservation League
- Coastal Expedition
- Donnelley Foundation
- Lowcountry Open Land Trust
- Mount Pleasant Land Conservancy
- Nature Serve
- Sangaree Middle (Berkeley County)
- SC Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- SC Forestry Commission
- SC Native Plant Society
- SC State Parks
- SC Wildlife Federation
- Sewee Association
- Sweetgrass Basket Association
- The Citadel
- The Nature Conservancy
- Thorn Company
- Tidewater Environmental
- Town of Awendaw (Mayor and Town Administrator)
- University of South Carolina
- US Army Corps of Engineers (ACE)
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

**“This forum was a good start at presenting the Forest Service’s planning process, especially for those starting at ‘ground zero’.” ~Forum Participant~**

At the end of the Ecological Sustainability Forum, participants were asked to answer the following five questions. Thirty-seven feedback forms were completed.

- How did this forum help you better understand the FS planning process?
- What was most valuable about this forum?
- What was least valuable about this forum?
- What would you suggest we do differently during future forums?
- What topics would you like to see covered in future forums?

## Synopsis of Comments

- Overall, respondents felt the Forest Service planning process was well-explained, even for those who did not have prior knowledge of the forest plan.
- Majority of respondents felt meeting and greeting stakeholders and networking were the most valuable aspects of the forum.
- Majority of respondents felt that sustainability issues were too deep and wanted more time in breakout sessions.
- Additionally, the majority of respondents wanted clarification on what input was desired from the audience and wanted more interaction.
- Prevailing topics respondents wanted to see covered in future forums were social and economic issues and other wildlife studies to include wildlife criteria and other management considerations and T & E wildlife species.

The following captures the responses on the feedback forms:

*Question 1:* How did this forum help you better understand the FS planning process?

### *Responses*

- The Forest Service planning process was well-explained, even for those who did not have prior knowledge of the forest plan
- Better understood how to help
- Understood how scientific evidence will better drive decisions
- Better understood the leadership team's and Forest Service employees' roles
- Understood planning process timeline better
- Better understood factors and groups involved
- Helped to understand the collaborative process

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*Question 2:* What was most valuable about this forum?

*Responses*

- Meeting and greeting stakeholders/networking
- Scientific presentations
- Planning process protocol
- Diverse group
- Everything was put into perspective
- Learning how different disciplines add to the planning process
- Understanding of ecological "issues" on the FM
- Learning about the urban sprawl and the FM management of it
- People connected with speakers and team leaders forming the basis for future collaborations
- Forum provided evidence that the planning process is committed to maintaining or restoring ecological integrity
- Having a wide variety of local interests and agency collaboration partners at the forum
- Knowledge on past or current conditions on forest
- Breakout sessions/Smaller Groups

The following captures the responses on the feedback forms:

*Question 3:* What was least valuable about this forum?

*Responses:*

- Give participants more time in breakout sessions
- Sustainability issues were too deep
- Lack of introductions
- Allow all participants access to all breakout groups
- Room was dark and dank/more lighting
- Make sure speakers are prepared and anticipate certain questions; stay focused; know content
- Larger group
- Summary of breakout groups should have been clearer/Categorizing presentation
- Need more specifics (clarity) on input desired from audience
- Need more specifics on how to provide future input
- Breakouts need handouts of posters and slideshows so audience can take it in better

*Question 4:* What would you suggest we do differently during future forums?

*Responses:*

- More interaction
- Less presentation/less content
- Four-hour timeframe with one or two focused topics
- Have moderators prepared
- Have entire town council and elected officials attend/more locals
- Provide contact info for each presenter and partners/organizations represented
- Have more forums/longer forums/more breakout sessions
- Identify speakers on printed agenda
- Have need for change talk first to help distinguish breakout groups comments
- Better explain how feedback is used
- District ranger should have been part of last session
- Do not use acronyms such as WUI and EIS
- Introduce participants at the beginning of the forum
- Water and hydrology should be separate from the aquatic ecosystems

The following captures the responses on the feedback forms:

*Question 5:* What topics would you like to see covered in future forums?

*Responses:*

- Other wildlife studies besides the RCW, wildlife criteria and other management considerations, T & E wildlife species
- Soils presentation
- Social and economic issues
- Recs usage/Limits of motorized vehicles
- Fire ecology
- Invasives
- Grassroot community organizations and pineneedles
- 96 plan and what was accomplished and what didn't happen or worked
- Timeline and existing plan's content
- 2012 planning rule and what is new
- Climate change and its impact on systems i.e. drought, fire, disease
- Balancing natural communities with the desires of recreational groups
- Assessment findings and the need for change for select, most controversial topics
  - Wild Urban Interface
  - Recreation, Wilderness, Roadless
  - Co-ordinated planning with county, state, feds
  - Access
  - Non-native invasives
- Assessment findings and need for change for topics of interest (less controversial)
  - Long leaf pine restoration
  - Benefits from the forest (ecosystem services)
  - At risk species
  - Water, wetlands, aquatics
- Recreation (hunting included); public access
- Scenic quality
- Air quality (large adjacent metro, areas)
- Data on population growth and demographics (future demands)
- Water quality
- Rare Species
- More specific action plan
- Process for determining changes to management approaches
- How to integrate landowners, state parks, hunting clubs, etc. into the planning process

## Conclusion

The public has the opportunity to comment on every aspect of the revised forest plan. You can help us plan the forest future! Submit your comments and suggestions by email at [fmplanrevision@fs.fed.us](mailto:fmplanrevision@fs.fed.us). To receive email alerts, [click here](#).

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*Planning + Collaboration = Improvements*